

THE YEARS AHEAD

—what graduates can look forward to



COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY W. M. KIPLINGER
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by W. M. Kiplinger

Salutations to you graduates, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins of grads. And student brides and babies, too. And teachers and friends of grads who helped them get where they are today.

Congratulations to all of you.

Forty-six years ago I sat as you sit, in cap and gown at this university, a hot day in the old armory (that was before the fire), and we listened to a commencement speaker. I don't remember his name and I don't remember what he said. Such is fame.

I know that what you want is to get this thing over with, and grab your diplomas, and get out of here. But, no, you've got to listen to an address. I don't know just why.

Has anyone told you what I am going to talk about? Well, the subject matter is what you graduates face in the world in the next twenty-five years.

Now, that forgotten man who made the commencement address here back in 1912 did not tell us what lay ahead for us. That's why I didn't know in advance all about the First World War, or the roaring twenties, or the great depression of the thirties, or prohibition, or the Roosevelt New Deal. Nobody told us then that our children would be engaged in World War II and Korea.

I'm quite sure that I once looked upon radio as a pipe dream, television as science fiction, and the airplane as a tricky gadget, good for county fairs. My father was a carriage maker, and I knew the automobile would never replace the horse. An automobile in every garage? Phooey.

See how dumb we were in those days? But there's no need for you to be that dumb, if you'll try to look ahead.

Now how do I know what's ahead? Am I just putting on airs and dreaming dreams?

No, for I have picked the brains of many people who do see what's ahead in their own lines, their special lines, and they do know a few things. You may call this research if you wish, but I call it reporting, for I am a reporter.

Here's what I am going to tell you about yourselves, perfectly obvious:

Most of you will be married within the next two years, if you are not already married.

Most of you will have two or three children by the time you are thirty.

Most of you by the time you are forty will have teen-age children, very expensive children, getting ready for college.

That's how the time will fly for you.

Most of you will have good jobs, although perhaps you doubt it now. You will have several different jobs before you are in your mid-thirties. You will rattle around a bit, and make changes.

If at times you feel that you don't quite know where you are going, that's all right, don't worry your head off, don't get indigestion. The fact is that most people in their younger adult years don't quite know where they are going. You represent the rule, not the exception.

By the time you are forty you will be in the groove, and settled down in your life work, and you'll *know* it and you'll feel better.

Your salary, your income: Would you be interested in such a sordid matter, you in your cap and gown? Well, up until you are thirty, you won't make much more than those who didn't go to college. After that you'll make more. In your whole lifetime you will make so *much* more, from having gone to college, that you'll know it was a good investment, both in money and in other values.

Statistics show this: The average college graduate in a lifetime makes \$100,000 more than the average high school graduate. You've spent four years to make \$100,000 in the future.

And think of the bonus on top of the money, the bonus of cultural values.

Your income will rise as you go through life, not steadily, but in an assured way. It's always true, it's one of the things you can count upon and plan upon, one of the facts of life. And remember that some of you will do much better than the average.

Now about the world at large, apart from your individual selves.

Here's what I have to tell you about the next twenty-five years:

There will be no world war.

There will be limitation of armaments, but no total disarmament.

There will be a continuing cold war, but on the economic or trade fronts.

You will see the greatest spurt of material growth this country has ever known, starting in five or six years, running for two or three decades.

Really a good long boom.

But you will go through slumps and recessions within it, like the present one, for we have not yet learned how to prevent economic cycles.

New products, new methods galore. These are the fruits of science, technology, invention, engineering of the past. Such an outpouring you have never seen.

As for prices, you will live in a period of gradually rising prices. In twenty-five years, most things will cost about 50 per cent more than now, about half again higher than now.

Remember this and apply it when you get around to talking about how to handle your family money, and how to plan your affairs while you are young.

Along with all this material prosperity will come new problems, tough problems. They will be in the realm of social and political adjustments, and you've got to rattle with an awful lot of them.

Now let's go *short* sighted and talk about your next five years, not twenty-five, but five.

Start with this year. Jobs are scarce this year because of the recession. You won't necessarily find what you want. You may have to compromise and take something else.

But—that isn't so bad. That's just what generations of college graduates have done—until recent years when grads were so few and jobs so many. Those recent years were boom years. This year isn't.

There isn't going to be any deep depression, as some people fear, but there *will* be two years of rather moderate business. Stiff competition. Lots of difficulties. More than normal unemployment. A high plateau, but not a rapidly rising plateau, not a boom.

Then, come 1963, five years off, the beginning of the great boom. And why that boom, and why can it be foreseen and dated?

Well, look at yourselves. Most of you were born in the late thirties, and your parents weren't exactly swimming in prosperity, and parents generally weren't having so many children. You belong

to the trough of babies.

(Pardon me for referring to you as babies, and for assigning you to the trough.)

But after you were born the war came, and young folks rushed to get married, and rushed some more to have babies, and you never saw anything like that baby boom, during the war, and even after, even up to now.

Out of that baby wave, twenty-some years later, will come a wave of marriages, the line starting up in 1963, sure as shooting.

That means a building boom, demand for millions of new houses, and all the things that go into them.

Also new young workers to help make all those things. Even if you don't work in a factory, you will help indirectly to make all those things. You are a worker.

That much for the growth of people in this country.

Now add something onto the people. Add new *things*, new things produced by the new technology. More people, wanting more things, and more things crowding the markets—that's the combination that will make the boom.

By the time most of you are *thirty*, this new boom will be well under way.

You may want to know what new things we will have. Well, I hate to tell you, for you won't believe it. Like the old country woman who had never seen a giraffe, and when she saw it she said, "I don't believe it."

But here we go:

You will see electric power produced from atoms as a regular thing.

And you will *still* see coal, oil and gas as fuels.

You can have television screens on the wall of the room.

And, of course, TV in color, much more of it.

The wife can dust the house with electrostatic wands.

The automatic dishwasher can be wheeled to the table-side.

You will telephone almost anywhere in the country, merely by dialing.

Almost every new home will be air-conditioned.

And some new homes will be heated, lighted and cooled by rays from the sun, the apparatus in the roof.

Windows that close automatically when it rains.

Bed blankets that cool you.

You can have luminous ceilings to light your home.

You can have paper throw-away clothing.

Kitchen work will be faster.

Electronic cooking in just a few minutes.

Some foods preserved by radiation, not canned, not frozen.

The wife can shop by television.

The common cold probably will be licked.

Cancer and heart ailments probably will be controlled.

Old people will live five years longer than they do now, and with the wherewithal to live it out.

Productivity will mean more goods with less effort, more goods for all.

The four-and-one-half day work week will become standard, and in due course it will be four days.

This means more leisure, more vacationing, more travel. It does not insure more culture, but it does pave the way.

Is that enough? Do you think I am spinning yarns?

If so, ask your parents what they didn't believe when they were your age, and you will see that we have in common use today many of the things they didn't believe possible. We have had miracles, and we shall have *more* miracles.

A visitor to Washington saw this inscription on the Archives building: "What's Past Is Prologue." He asked the taxi driver what that meant. The driver replied: "Oh, that's just government gobbledegook. It means 'You ain't seen nuthin' yet.' "

You will see such things as these:

Your inter-city mail delivered by rockets.

Airplanes, trains and ships powered by atoms. (Remember the old-fashioned diesel?)

Space travel by people.

Space travel to the moon, maybe.

Television across the oceans, sure.

That means seeing and hearing people in other lands, right in your own home.

Fresh water from the sea.

The beginnings of food from the sea, new kinds of food, not just fish, for millions of people.

The sea, the tropics and science will produce plenty of food for the world.

New metals, new combinations of metals, to do all kinds of marvelous jobs, not now possible.

New arrangements of molecules, to make new plastics, textiles, metals, medicines, building materials.

(And, by the way, some of the great new scientific developments are coming from this very campus, right under your nose, and from the great Battelle Institute that is within sight of where you are sitting.)

Those items do not even begin to cover the future. They are just miscellaneous, just a few samples.

The great marvels of all will be those that we do not yet know about—things yet to be discovered and invented. (I stole that thought from our own beloved Charles F. Kettering.)

The wisest of men know that all of us put together do not know very much as yet. What we don't know is far greater than what we do know.

Let's jump to politics.

The two-party system will continue in this country. First one party will be in, then the other. Right now the Democratic Party is the more aggressive.

The so-called center will move further to the left, over the long pull of decades. The middle of the road will eventually be lefter, not righter.

Labor will not form its own party. It will work through one of the other parties, just now the Democratic.

Labor unions will have their ups and downs, but over the long pull they will grow. They will get cleaned up. They will become more responsible, in the general public interest.

Federal government and state governments will do more collaborating, as states develop stronger muscles.

Federal government will do more financing or underwriting of big industries. Railroads, for example, and others, too. People will refer to this as a growth of state capitalism, but it won't be doctrinaire or theoretical socialism. It will be earthy, practical, and generally accepted—step by step, just as in the past.

As for taxes, they will rise. You will pay more taxes than your parents did, and you will gripe just as they did.

Federal taxes will go down a little, but not much. The necessity for defense will be with us for a long time. Full peace will not be in your lifetime, human nature all over the world being what it is.

State and local taxes will go up a good deal, just because people will demand so much more and better service from their state and local governments—in schools, hospitals, social services and utilities.

The cities will continue to grow outward, the suburbs extending miles farther than now. That's a good tip if you ever save up enough money to buy land or real estate (and you *will*).

The downtown cities will be done over and rehabilitated. The slums will be going or gone. In their place will rise new homes, new apartment buildings, new shopping centers, new traffic arteries and systems of parking lots or buildings. The rebuilding of our cities,

internally, will be one of America's major enterprises. It will pay off—in money, health, and human welfare, and so will enhance the value of the nation's most precious resource—human beings.

In due course a number of people will move from the suburbs back into the cities—when their children are raised and gone.

Also people will move from region to region, as their changing work requires.

The fastest growing areas, in terms of population, will be Florida, California, and the Southwest.

Ohio and the adjoining industrial states will grow. Ohio will grow 37 per cent by 1970—37 per cent above the 1955 population. (Think of the load on schools and cities.)

The number of farmers will continue to decline, with bigger farms and more machinery, and a continued movement to the towns and cities. (The farmer's daughter will be a city gal.)

Where you graduates ought to look for jobs is a big subject, and I am afraid to start on it, lest I never finish. But this bare hint: Take a look at the list of growingest industries, the growingest lines. The job opportunities in them will increase.

They are the best fields for investment, too.

The schools will be better. That's insured by the tremendous burst of agitation and dissatisfaction about them in these days.

We'll have better physical facilities, more teachers, more teaching. We'll pay better, and we'll develop new higher status for teachers, which goes far beyond pay.

Television will become a standard tool to extend teaching, both in classrooms and in homes.

But—I can *not* foresee the time when we shall have *fully* licked the teacher problem.

As for colleges and universities, both good news and bad news.

One thing fairly certain is that all the colleges and universities put together can not grow fast enough to take care of all the young people approaching college age. There *must* be more screening and selection. Entrance requirements must be higher. It will be harder for your kids to get into college than it was for you.

Tuition will go higher. It's *got* to go higher to pay the higher costs. This applies to both public and private institutions.

To pay the costs, more students will do more borrowing and put mortgage loans on themselves, to be paid after graduation, in the earning years. There will be a new system of financing for this, a new form of long-range credit. Note the Massachusetts plan for this.

We shall have a similar plan in Ohio and other states.

Ohio State University (or any other state university) will not grow in numbers as fast in the future as in the past. It will have more branches throughout the state. Some will be two-year schools, like higher high schools. In the main University there will be a smaller proportion of undergraduates, a higher proportion of post-grads.

Private or independent colleges will have to have public money, whether they like it or not. We can't get along without the small colleges, and in the long pull many of them just can not finance themselves.

Public money for scholarships, both federal and state, will be coming along. But scholarships *can* become rackets. In some ways they already have, for they favor the rich institutions at the expense of the poor institutions. They even warp the course of good students, luring them to go one place when they really ought to go some other place.

More postgraduate work for a number of selected students—yes, of course. The times will require it. And not just in science and engineering, either. In other fields, too, in the social and humanities fields. (We don't all have to be scientists or engineers, but we've all got to be *human*.)

In world affairs, the great issues will be:

- (1) Communism.
- (2) The rise of the backward nations.

Communism will persist, but communist peoples will discover some merits in the private enterprise system, and will graft these features onto communist ideas and methods. The communist zeal will shift from militaristic aggression to trade or economic competition, and this nation is going to have its hands full, devising new setups for world trade—just to compete.

We of the West will be compelled to borrow or adapt some features normally cataloged as socialistic, such as government capital participating with private capital to do big jobs that can't be done by either alone.

No world war between Russia and the West, because—

Both sides are too much afraid of starting it purposely, and both sides will avoid slips that might start it accidentally.

Partial disarmament, limitation of the A and H bombs, within ten years. (Don't expect too much too fast.)

A big Defense Department will be with us through your lifetime.

As for the backward nations—in Africa, in the Middle East, and in Asia—they will rise and progress, and we in the United States,

after considerable faltering and fiddling around, will *help* them to rise and progress. (Don't be misled by our current hemming and hawing. It's just temporary.)

Count on more international trade throughout the world, on two-way streets, lots of them, running in all directions. Trading will do more than anything else to make peoples acquainted, not afraid of each other, dependent on each other, and peacefully disposed.

Now let's touch on social advances, as distinguished from the material and political.

Well, naturally, we will have them, for our social conscience is much more alert and alive today than ever before.

Underprivileged peoples are gaining privileges and opportunities pretty fast. It's true of Negroes. The progress is certain to continue.

But social progress will lag behind material progress, just as it has in the past, because human minds, ideas, concepts and prejudices of all kinds are so much less flexible than materials.

There isn't time today even to outline all the social changes that lie ahead. We must be content with the observation that they will be slower and more difficult, for they involve the use of our brains, but our brains tend to get all tied up with tradition, with the past.

What we all need is a freeing of the social mind. We shall get a little of it, but not enough.

Churches are growing fast. They will grow much more because the big crop of young parents, scheduled for the sixties and thereafter, will want religious education for their children. (Already you can see this in the suburbs, the suburban churches.)

But also remember that our people are religious, deep down. They are moved by religious impulses, both in domestic affairs and in foreign affairs. Sometimes this gets concealed by the fact that people don't talk about their religion. They tend to keep it under cover, but it's there, nevertheless. We are, in fact, a more religious people than we dare admit.

Now I'm getting ready to end. In this talk about the future there is really no ending, but there *is* such a thing as stopping.

What I've told you is that you are on the edge of the greatest period of material growth in history, not only for this country, but for the world. Materially you will rise far above your parents' generation.

But the social and political problems you face will be tougher than ever before, because our system is so much more complex than ever

before. It will not be smooth sailing. The future will be tempestuous, and in ways different from the past.

You are probably a bit frightened. You wonder whether you will make good.

I can give you the answer: You will.

You wonder whether you have what it takes—the ability, the character, the heft.

I can give you the answer: You have.

The reason I say this is that I see you as a part of the stream of life, not separated from those who have gone before you or who come after you, and the stream of life is a very vigorous thing.

I quote from the old Congregational hymn:

*"Creation's Lord, we give thee thanks,
That this thy world is incomplete,
That work awaits our hands and feet,
That thou has not yet finished man,
That we are in the making still."*

... that we are in the making still.

Good luck and God bless you.